

Lower Weyanoke
Weyanoke Post Office
Charles City County
Virginia

HABS NO. VA-290

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VA
19-WEY,
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PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORIC AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA
District of Virginia

Historic American Buildings Survey
Major Eugene Bradbury, District Officer
210 East Franklin St., Richmond, Va.

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Weyanoke
Charles City County, Virginia

The estate of Weyanoke lies on the north shore of the James River and is mentioned in history as early as 1607. John Smith and Christopher Newport, during their exploring of the river in 1607, found the Weyanoke Indians established here.

When Sir George Yeardley was Governor of the Colony of Virginia, he acquired an estate at this point, but he later sold it to Abraham Piersey. Towards the end of the 17th century, the plantation passed into the possession of the Harwood family. Though there had been an earlier house on the property, in 1740 William Harwood built the present spacious frame house. Toward the end of the 18th century, Agnes, daughter of Major Samuel Harwood, married Fielding Lewis, and inherited the old homestead. His daughter, Eleanor, who likewise inherited the homestead, married Robert Douthat, and they had several children. One of these, Major Robert Douthat, was the next master of Weyanoke, which he sold in 1876. Another son, however, Fielding Lewis Douthat, inherited part of the estate, and brought Mary Willis Marshall (descendant of the Chief Justice) to Upper Weyanoke as his bride in 1854. The mother-in-law continued to live at Lower Weyanoke.

(Compiled from Robert A. Lancaster, Jr., Historic Virginia homes and churches ... Philadelphia and London, J. B. Lippincott company, 1915, and The James River Garden Club, Historic gardens of Virginia ... Richmond, Va., The William Byrd press, inc., 1923).

Letter from John H. Minge, 924 Cordova Place, South Jacksonville 7, Florida, dated May 27, 1947, regarding ownership of Weyanoke:

"You are correct through Abraham Piersey. The title from Piersey to 1700 was much divided (I am speaking of the 2200 acre tract North of the James, land bounded on South, South West, South East by the James River). About 1702 much of this land passed into the hands of the descendants of James Minge and staid in that ownership until sold by Dr. John Minge in 1843 to Stainback and others who in 1854 sold to Mr. Fielding Lewis Douthat. Deed records of Charles City County show sale by Dr. Minge (7th generation of Minge family in Virginia) and he describes the Weyanoke land as where he lives and to be bounded on South and West by James River and partly on the North by land occupied by Mrs. Douthat in 1843 was the same or part of the same 234 acres that was assessed to Thomas Harwood, Sen. as shown on the Charles City County Land Book of 1789. (This later record is in Virginia Archives in Richmond and I have a photostat of same.) On the same page is assessed by Collier Harrison (who had married widow of David Minge d 1781 leaving large estate and five children) for Minge estate. This list shows twelve tracts assessed to Minge and one 900 tract which is what is called Weyanoke. This tract passed by will to John son of David, and from John in 1827 by will to Dr. John Minge of the seventh generation, who sold it in 1843. Only in 1854 pass to the Lewis or Douthat families.

Weyanoke

"I do not know why the Harwoods, Lewis and Douthat including our very good friend Mr. Lyon G. Tyler failed to examine the records which clearly show the incorrectness of the many published statements concerning this historical land. After the death of John Minge in 1827 (former husband of Sarah Harrison and father of 11 children by her (her father was Benjamin Harrison the signer and her mother Elizabeth Bassett). At death of John Minge 1827 his large holdings of slaves and of land was divided between his children, including seven sons, three of them moving early to Alabama and two of them built homes calling them "Weyanoke" for their old Va. home.

"I being the grandson of David 1811-1887 the youngest of John's sons and becoming interested in my family history was surprised to find that in the genealogies the Minge family was not mentioned although the records are clear that they owned "Weyanoke", "Sherwood Forrest", "Kittiwau" and a number of other Charles City places for about 150 years, including a farm on the South Side of the river in Martin Brandon parish, where they established an old Grave Yard possibly before 1669. I visited this grave yard lately and found a plot about 80 ft. square marked by four brown stone posts and on each post was chiseled "I.M." (meaning J.M.) and under that "1760". These posts about 8 x 8 inches four or five feet out of the ground are still in perfect preservation after being exposed to 187 years of weather. I feel that John Minge of the fifth generation of Minge family placed these posts there to mark the spot. I also think that was possibly the location of or near 1st and 2nd Brandon Church, with "Church Landing" on James River near. This landing was almost opposite the old church site on Weyanoke about 5/8 of mile south east of the present "Weyanoke" (called Lower now) house.

James Minge, 1st generation, was in possession of more than 500 acres of land around this grave yard in 1669 by official records in archives Va. John d 1772 (?) putting the posts was in the fifth generation, David d 1781 of sixth generation in his will ordered his remains put in this grave yard and we find there the tomb of John Landridge, nephew of Mrs. George Washington, being buried there in 1799. J. D. married (daughter of David Minge, d 1781) Rebecca Jones Minge. While landridge stone is the only one found except the I.(J)M. corner post, there is every reason to think that six generations of this Minge line are buried there, although larger land holdings of family were on the North side of James River".